

Environmental Health Specialist Registration Program Update

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First published in the CEHA Bulletin, March 2001

Where can I obtain information about registered environmental health specialists (REHS) quickly? How do we increase public awareness of what we do? When is the next REHS exam? These questions and more have been the impetus for several actions the Environmental Health Specialist Registration Program has recently taken to broaden the outreach of the program.

Have you visited our web site yet? We have developed the web page to provide pertinent information about the program for prospective applicants and active REHSs as well as the general public. Included on the page are the application form, requirements list [see Health and Safety Code section 106635], updated trainee openings list, and exam preparation materials. A document entitled "How Do I Become a REHS? Frequently Asked Questions" has been developed to explain a bit about what a REHS does and how a person becomes a REHS. The web page also provides links to California Environmental Health Association (CEHA), California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health (CCDEH), National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), and individual county web pages. Is your county linked?

Once you reach the web page, you will want to bookmark it as there are several clicks to get there: www.dhs.ca.gov. Click on ORGANIZATION, PREVENTION SERVICES, DDWEM, ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT BRANCH, EHS REGISTRATION PROGRAM. If you want to link your county's web page, email the web page address to rhook1@dhs.ca.gov.

In order to develop a long range strategic plan for the EHS Registration Program, a survey was mailed to all REHSs last fall in an effort to determine the areas in which registrants feel the program should focus. Both the numerical and narrative portions of that survey will be tabulated and collated, and the results of the survey will be published. Additionally, the EHS Registration Program will work closely with the EHS Registration Committee, CCDEH, and CEHA in order to maximize the potential of the profession. Thank you to all who shared your perceptions by responding to this survey.

CCDEH is interested in making resources available to the EHS Registration Program in order to have the application and examination portions of the program be more closely fee supported. The intent is to enable the program to expand beyond reviewing applications and administering examinations. CCDEH would like to see the program reevaluate the existing university approved environmental health degree programs and encourage the establishment of new EH degree programs, evaluate the local environmental health training plans and explore options to enhance those training plans, and provide a variety of other services all designed to strengthen the field of environmental health.

To this end CCDEH has met the first legislative deadline by submitting language to the Legislative Counsel for a bill which would increase the application fee and the examination fee. The intention is to make the existing registration and renewal fee paid by REHSs be available for services which would enhance the overall REHS profession rather than be used for services primarily covering the applications and examinations. Watch for legislative information as this bill develops.

This is an exciting time for the environmental health profession. We can empower ourselves to maximize its potential. It will take action from all fronts to broaden the opportunities. Whether it is an individual REHS who visits a seventh grade class to talk about environmental health or CEHA who sponsors training to strengthen REHS skills or CCDEH who takes leadership on the legislative front, we all must work to build the REHS profession. Be informed. Be involved. Be active.